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PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING AS A PREREQUISITE FOR SELECTING MILITARY POLICE

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PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING AS A PREREQUISITE FOR SELECTING MILITARY POLICE

1. Introduction.

The Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army have expressed concern about the quality of law enforcement personnel and their selection procedures. This concern was caused in part by serious/sensitive incidents involving military police acts of misconduct by junior enlisted, first line enlisted supervisor, and in some cases officers.¹ Various military studies have identified specific action that should be taken in an attempt to improve the quality of military police.² One of the actions considered was the use of psychological testing as part of the selection criteria.

Concomitently, the problem of selecting personnel for law enforcement is one which has plagued civilian police administrators as well. During the last decade, three Presidential Commissions have determined that a reduction of crime and disorder in the United States requires an upgrading in the quality of police personnel and their training.

Public sentiment has also intensified in that area, due to police corruption and illegal activities exposed by commissions investigating law enforcement activities. Many civilian jurisdictions faced with personnel selection problems are using or considering the use of psychological tests.

2. Scope.

The decision to use any test, or battery of tests, should be dependent upon its ability to attain three standards. First, the characteristics being tested must actually influence work performance. Secondly, the test must be able to predict more efficiently and economically than the screening method already in use.

This study will evaluate the feasibility of adopting psychological testing from the above perspective.

3. Characteristics Must Influence Work Performance.

There is common agreement among military law enforcement supervisors, civilian police administrators, as well as individuals outside this discipline, on the desirability of improving the quality of police personnel and their selection criteria. However, the standards that should be used in obtaining this goal are a matter of dispute. This is due in part to the complexity of the police role in the military and modern society. Today's military policeman not only is expected to apprehend criminals, but also to be engaged in a variety of other activities, such as traffic accident investigations, settling domestic disturbances and providing information and traffic aid for population control. In addition, he is expected to perform a myriad of administrative functions. All of which requires him to possess different skills, motives or personal qualities. Some are able to perform certain tasks extremely well, but may be unsuited for other tasks. The selection process must provide appropriate numbers of personnel capable of performing all tasks.

Selection criteria utilized in the military and outlined in Army Regulation 611-201, Enlisted Military Occupational Specialties, does not adequately define or measure those characteristics that may influence work performance. (See Table 1-1, MP Qualifications.) This regulation defines the physical, mental and special requirements for military police, which are primarily the same standards utilized by civilian jurisdictions with a few minor exceptions. Excluding the physical requirements, the others that

would possibly be indicators of performance can be placed in two general categories, either undesirable behavior or innate qualities such as emotional control and initiative. Additionally, military police candidates are administered two tests, The Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) and The Army Classification Battery (ACB), which are designed to measure aptitude and trainability, rather than innate qualities. The present lack of definitive characteristics which affect performance makes a valid evaluation of adopting psychological testing as selection criteria impossible, until several tasks are undertaken.

The first task is to identify those jobs to be performed by military police. Once the jobs have been identified then a complete job analysis should be conducted to establish the basic capabilities and skill each military policeman will need. However, these performance standards need not cover the whole range of skills and abilities which will be required. They should be categorized as permanent versus modifiable human characteristics. This will enable individuals who possess either undesirable characteristics or deficiencies which can be modified through learning and training to be acceptable. Once the determination is made on the skills and abilities required of MP's, the next step is to derive standards based for these skills and abilities. The final, and probably the most difficult, task is to determine the effect these standards have on performance.

For example, one of the standards used for selection of military policemen prohibits a record of civilian convictions other than minor traffic offenses. Another requires that there be no pattern of undesirable

TABLE 1-1 MP Qualifications

Each applicant must possess the following cumulative qualifications:

I. Physical

- A. Profile: 222221
- B. Red/green color discrimination
- C. Height: 5 ft 9 in (male) 5 ft 4 in (female)

II. Aptitude area

- A. AApr-1973: GT
- B. ACB-1973: ST

III. Security clearance: Confidential

IV. Other

- A. No record of Special or General Court-Martial convictions.
- B. No record of more than 30 days lost under section 972-10 U.S.C., appendix 3 MCM 1968.
- C. No record of civil traffic convictions or no record of traffic offenses, either civilian or military, that warrant assessment of a total of more than six points for single offense or more than a total of 12 points for two or more offenses as defined in the point assessment table contained in AR 190-5 during the 12 month period immediately preceding the date of enlistment or reenlistment in CMF or date of entry into Military Police Advance Individual Training.
- D. No record of civilian convictions other than minor traffic offenses.
- E. No record of enlistment waiver granted.
- F. No pattern of undesirable behavior as evidenced by any record, civilian or military.

G. Possess a military driver battery 1 score of 85 or higher.

H. Minimum age of 18 years at the time of enlistment.

behavior as evidenced by any record, civilian or military. They both assume that persons with criminal records are likely to be recidivists while those with good moral characters are likely to continue along the path of virtue, and the criminal record is an accurate reflection on his conduct. However, it has been pointed out in the President's Commission On Law Enforcement And Administration Of Justice, that the majority of criminal conduct goes unreported and unapprehended.⁵ At least one out of three citizens have probably committed a felony without having it recorded against him. As a consequence, the use of the criminal record as a screening device is hardly a complete measure of conduct. This screening system tends to exclude the careless or "dumb" criminals, but is not a sensitive measure of all criminality.

The belief that criminal predispositions are permanent and past criminality predicts to future criminality has been supported by criminologist studies on parole predictions.⁶ These studies have also indicated that recidivism depends upon a variety of factors, such as, age at time of first offense, work record, marital history, etc. What this suggests is that the present standard has a reasonable basis, its limitations and range of errors is completely unknown. What is needed are a series of scientific studies which relate juvenile offenses to later conduct so that, knowing what kind of a record a candidate has, a prediction can be made of his chances of returning to or continuing criminal activity.

Another example of how present selection standards may or may not have an effect on performance is the minimum age requirement. The minimum age for military police personnel is eighteen years. It has been argued that persons under twenty one years of age lack emotional maturity, and it has also been suggested that the minimum age be raised to twenty one. While it is apparent that chronological age has some relationship to emotional maturity, it is also evident that there is no one to one correlation. Some persons are emotionally immature at age fifty. Background checks, interviews, psychiatric evaluations and psychological tests should be able to establish emotional maturity with considerable more certainty than a fixed age standard. Even if the present minimum standards are modified, future selection procedures may require sequential changes. At present the method of selection is based on cost and convenience. The easiest and cheapest steps come first so that fewer men will have to be evaluated by more expensive and time consuming procedures. This is reasonable from the standpoint of cost and time, however it may not be reasonable in terms of selection efficiency. A possible improvement has been offered by Stone and Kendall,⁷ called the successive "hurdle" technique. All standards shown by research to be related to performance are placed in the order of their importance. The standard that best predicts work success comes first, the second best comes next and so on. The selection steps are arranged in the same order. The first evaluator is the most efficient which allows those to pass the first hurdle to continue to the second and so on.

The advantage of this method is a host of candidates who have passed the first screener are not carried along, because that screener has a low order of relationship to work. However, before tests are used in screening military law enforcement applicants it is necessary that there be evidence that the proposed test work by adding accuracy to and economy in prediction. This does not mean that it should be expected that the test will make perfect prediction, or their judgements will be without error.

From the preceding analysis and evaluation the following conclusions can be drawn:

- a. An accurate and valid determination concerning the adoption of psychological testing is dependent upon the identification of viable standards.
- b. The standards identified must have an effect on performance.
- c. Present selection criteria should be examined for possible modification to enhance selection quality.
- d. Selection criteria does not appear to be as discriminatory as it was designed to be.

4. The Test Must Be Able To Predict Success Or Failure On The Job.

The primary purpose of employing a psychological test in selection procedures is to predict how the applicant will perform on the job for which he/she is selected. Once a number of skills or attributes have been identified as likely to be associated with work performance, a test or possibly a battery of different tests can be used to measure an ability or aptitude component of the job.

A large number of police departments today utilize psychological testing as well as civil service testing and other means of screening

applicants. Since 1952 the Los Angeles Police Department has had a consultant psychiatrist doing the psychological and psychiatric screening of their police applicants. The overall screening process involves a written civil service test, a complete physical examination, a background investigation conducted by trained investigators, an oral board consisting of a sergeant and two business men from the community, psychological testing including the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, the Group Rorschach and a Free Drawing and a brief psychiatric interview.⁸ This information is then assembled and a decision is made whether or not to disqualify the applicant on psychiatric grounds. There is no attempt to select a particular type of individual best suited for police work. Rather the task has been to weed out those who are unsuitable by virtue of emotional or character disturbances. Those who are borderline may be admitted with a note to the training division to further evaluate him during the five month training program.

There are various other tests and selection standards that have potential use in police selection. Their applicability for use as selection instruments for MP's will depend on the selection of those characteristics that affect work performance. The following list briefly identifies some of the tests that are presently in the field, that may have potential screening/selection application for military police.

The Strong Vocational Interest Blank, a General Psychological test, which attempts to measure more general human characteristics, such as personality, interest, intelligence, etc., has shown promise for possible

use in police selection. This is a questionnaire that the applicant completes which identifies his or her interests. The results show if the interests of the person taking the test correspond to or are different from those persons working in each of a number of vocations. Norms* for policement indicate whether the applicant's own interests are expressed so as to be relatively similar or dissimilar to those of working policement. A limitation of this type test is that norms are based on a relatively small group of officers and cannot be said to represent the variety of range of personnel found in this country.⁹

There also exist several attitude tests which have been used and shown to be closely related to more general personality and opinion factors.

The "F" Scale measures fascist-tending extremist views and is related to ethnocentrism (the belief one's own group is superior and others are inferior). This test is derived from extensive research on authoritarian personality and political and racial extremism.¹⁰

The Machover DAP is another test which in the hands of skilled clinician has shown to be effective in the detection of persons with overly aggressive or disturbed delinquent or psychotic tendencies.¹¹

*Norms are statistics which report the performance of other individuals who have taken the same test. They show the distribution of scores, usually among various designated groups, and are used in comparing a given person's score ordinarily obtained on the test.

The Cornell Index is a written test which proved useful in screening psychiatric cases for the military. It is given and scored quickly and may be easily used in conjunction with routine medical examination. It contains many questions about physical health which are of interest to the examining physician as well as to the clinical psychologist.¹²

The Dogmatism Scale constructed by Rokeach measures open versus close-mindedness. Scores on it are associated with authoritarian personality and with traits such as openness to new ideas, willingness to examine issues for oneself, general fears of the work and anxiety over threats from other persons, over conformity, and difficulty in synthesizing new ideas.¹³

A test for rigidity or flexibility in approach to specific problems, and those attitudes which underly the authoritarian personality are examined by the Sanford rigidity scale. This test is part of the California Psychological Inventory.¹⁴

The California Psychological Inventory is a written test which measures general nonpathological functioning. It includes the Gough-Sanford rigidity scale and has many other scales including one designed to measure self-assurance, maturity, responsibility, and intellectual efficiency. There are norms based on 13,000 cases.¹⁵

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) is widely used for diagnosis of neurotic or psychotic tendencies. It includes scales for the detection of homosexual or psychopathic trends. The latter persons being amoral and asocial, likely to engage in certain criminal activities.

Scores on this scale differentiate groups of delinquents from non-delinquents. The test can be given in a written form to groups of applicants, but must be interpreted by a professional clinical psychologist, or psychiatrist, who has had experience with the test.¹⁶ One study utilizing the MMPI was administered to a sheriff's department in a suburban county. The study group consisted of twenty-eight applicants who had passed a routine civil service screening test and a physical agility test. Each was given a battery of psychological tests, and a careful background check. Investigators called on neighbors, employers, school personnel and agencies which had knowledge of the applicants. Record checks were made with the FBI, the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and the State Department of Motor Vehicles. Ten with adverse psychological test results were referred for psychiatric examination. Results were compared with judgments made independently by an expert oral board of police administrators. Findings were as follows:

Using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory as a means for diagnosing potential character defects, measured by the scores for psychopathic deviate, lying and homosexual trends, it was found that eight out of twenty-eight men taking the MMPI were rated as having some character defects. Nevertheless, the man who had the highest psychopathic deviate score on the MMPI had no derogatory information in the supplemental material. The supplemental material had evidence of dishonesty, nine men were found to have past misconduct. Among these, five had high psychopathic deviate scores on the MMPI, one scored

higher on homosexual tendencies, the remaining three had no MMPI signs of character defects. In this group of limited size the MMPI performed relatively well; producing 12 percent false positives and thirty-three percent false negatives. A false positive is a man identified by a test as having a defect but who is found on the basis of other information to have no defect. A false negative is a case found in the test to be free of defect but found to have defect on other measures.¹⁷

The last test to be discussed that has potential use for psychological screening is Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF). This test is a multidimensional set of sixteen questionnaire scales. It is designed to provide information about an individual's standing on the majority of primary personality factors, by correlating various interests, aptitude, creativity and intelligence measures through the use of regression equations for predicting adjustment, adaptation, effectiveness, etc., in various occupations. The authors claim the test measures functional or "source traits," as opposed to the arbitrary or subjective source traits measured by other tests. Additionally, source trait profiles have been developed by Cattell for various occupations to include policemen, musicians, medical personnel, teachers, executives and industrial supervisors, just to name a few. The individual being tested is assigned a source trait score ranging from one to ten in each of the sixteen factors. An evaluation and comparison through the use of computer analysis is made with the testee's source trait profile and that of the occupational group.¹⁸

It can be concluded from the preceding examination that there is good evidence that psychological testing can measure human characteristics which are associated with various kinds of success and failure in work situations including the performance of police duties. Studies to date indicate that no one test will be a sufficient measure of performance. Refinement in research design, in testing and in statistics, offer hope for increasing the capacity of test batteries to predict, and thereby to select well defined performance standards. Although there are many tests which have potential utility in police selection, their adoption should not be considered until careful scrutiny has been given to the task and standards assigned to military police.

5. Test Must Be More Efficient and Economical Than Present System.

One of the prerequisites for determining whether to use a test is its ability to predict either more efficiently or more economically than the traditional screening method already in use. If the test is not capable of insuring this, then it should be discarded. Unless it could be shown that testing has some advantage over the traditional methods, e.g., less expensive or easier to employ. To determine the feasibility of adopting psychological testing based on being more efficient and economical than the present screening system, at least three conditions should be considered. It is common knowledge that no testing instrument or screening device will be able to predict 100 percent accuracy. Therefore, an acceptable level of accuracy or an objective percentage level should be established by Department of the Army. Once this is accomplished an evaluation instrument or criteria

must be established to measure the effectiveness of the screening instrument's ability to attain the established level of accuracy or objective standard.

Next an evaluation of present military police performance must be accomplished under current selection criteria. This evaluation and comparison should be initiated after Department of the Army has established objective standards mentioned previously. If present military police are performing without undue cost, incompetence, or disruption as a result of the present selection system, then psychological testing may not be worth the expenditure of additional resources. If the screening system does not meet DA objective standards and MP performance results in moderate inefficiency, then innovative methods to include psychological testing should be considered.

Finally, each screening method, current or proposed, should be evaluated and compared to determine if they are cost effective. Once these three conditions are completed, an appropriate evaluation can be made for adopting the psychological test as selection criteria for meeting the three standards.

6. Conclusion.

a. There is sufficient evidence that psychological testing can enhance the selection system used for military police.

b. Prior to implementing psychological testing or modifying existing criteria or selection procedures, extensive job analysis for military police is required and definitive characteristics and standards applicable to job performance identified.

c. Current selection criteria should be examined to determine if it actually accomplishes the objectives for which it was intended.

d. An evaluation should be conducted of present psychological tests for police screening, specifically the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire for possible adoption.

e. Department of the Army needs to establish performance standards Army-wide for military police, i.e., a percent of the total MP force that is not expected to perform to acceptable standards.

7. Recommendations.

a. Department of the Army task an agency to conduct a detailed job analysis to determine those characteristics that affect MP performance.

b. Department of the Army task an agency to determine the effectiveness of current selection criteria in accomplishing its intended objective.

c. Department of the Army establish evaluation criteria or instrument to determine the adequacy of the selection criteria.

d. Department of the Army establish an acceptable performance level for military police Army-wide.

e. That final consideration for using psychological testing as selection criteria should be held in abeyance until recommendation a thru d have been accomplished.

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FOOTNOTES

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